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CHINESE
LESSONS
for
AMERICAN
MARXISTS

by
Russell
Earl Browder

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- - -

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CHINESE LESSONS FOR AMERICAN MARXISTS.

The year 1948 closed with sweeping military victories for the Communist-led armies in China, forecasting for the year 1949 the complete disintegration and collapse of the Kuomintang regime of Chiang Kai-shek which had ruled most of China since 1927. The next government of China will be led by the Chinese Communists.

These events are of world-historical significance. They represent a major shift in the balance of world-power relationships. They forecast the disappearance of the old system of colonial empires from Asia. They mark a new stage in world history. They have, therefore, profound and many-sided lessons to teach all serious students of history, especially Marxists.

It is my purpose tonight to concentrate upon one angle of the Chinese events, namely, the light which is thrown by Chinese Marxist success upon the causes of American Marxist failure.

I.

China and America represent, in the basic question of their stages of economic development, the two extreme poles among the great nations--China the most backward and undeveloped technically, and America the most advanced.

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In the field of effective social and political thought, however, as represented by Marxism, China is far ahead of America. In China the Party of Marxism has moved swiftly and steadily into the leadership of the nation, especially since the end of World War II; in America, on the contrary, the Party of Marxism has, since the end of the War, swiftly lost one position after another, until today it has squandered the political gains of two decades, and has plunged itself into a political blind-alley.

In China, the land of the most extreme "objective difficulties" for the Marxists, the party of Marxism is busily explaining to the masses how these difficulties are to be overcome and turned into their opposite, how the arms of the reactionary camp are transformed into the arms of the people. In America the party of Marxism is busily explaining that its continuous defeats and loss of following are the natural consequences of the "objective difficulties" which it faces.

Yes, the contrast between China and America is sharp and deep, and extends to a contrast between the role being played by the Marxists of the two lands, a contrast of outstanding success on the one hand with inglorious failure on the other.

At the same time, however, there are also instructive and illuminating points of similarity between the two lands. Thus, in the present historical moment when the Marxists of Europe are leading the masses of their countries directly

in immediate transition from the capitalist system into the new socialist system of economy, the Marxists of both China and America are agreed that the immediate transition to socialism is not on the order of the day in their own countries.

In the U.S.A., the Marxists in the recent national elections gave their support openly and unequivocally to the Progressive Party of Henry Wallace, with its frankly pro-capitalist program. They explained that even complete victory for the Wallace new party "would not yet present it with the task of breaking the rule of the monopolies and thereby effecting the transition to socialism." (1)*

In China the triumphant Marxists are careful to explain that "in the present stage....the Chinese people cannot and therefore should not attempt to build a socialist state" (2), that their program will "promote the free development of private capitalist economy" (3), and that this stage "will require a prolonged period" (4)—a period of "over scores of years." (5).

How are we to understand this fact, that in America and China, representing the highest and lowest stages of technical advance of the productive forces among the great nations, the Marxist parties of the two lands make the similar judgement that the moment has not been reached when a strong initiative should be given to lead the nation.
*(Footnote: The number in parentheses which follows each quotation in this pamphlet indicates the Reference Note at the end of the pamphlet which gives the source of the quotation.)

The pattern thus set, of America's complaisant adaptation of its policy to the most primitive reaction in China, became the general pattern for American policy throughout the world. The break-up within America of the Roosevelt coalition, and Marshall's surrender to Chiang Kai-shek's policy in China, created the conditions in which President Truman finally capitulated to the reactionary camp, dismissed Wallace from his Cabinet, and sponsored the ill-fated Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan, both of which are rapidly approaching the same general fate of open bankruptcy that has been fully revealed in the substitute "China policy."

During those most important developments of 1946 and their consequences in 1947 and 1948, there was no sign of a strong progressive camp in America, fighting for the retention and application of Roosevelt's China policy.

Why was this? China has for years occupied a place of special interest and attention in the progressive camp, and especially in the Left wing. The Left, under Communist inspiration, has often intervened with much effectiveness in helping to shape the course of American policy on China in a progressive direction. This was especially true during the war. It was from the Left that Roosevelt drew his knowledge and understanding of China, out of which he formulated his enlightened and progressive policy. Why did this force for progressive leadership and struggle disappear from the scene after Roosevelt's death?

The answer to this question is to be found in the fact that the Communists, after Roosevelt's death, were not preparing to fight for the Roosevelt China policy but, on the contrary, had decided to abandon their support to that policy as being one hostile to China's interest and a mere policy of American imperialist expansion. They could not take the lead in mobilizing the masses to preserve the Roosevelt policy, because they themselves were openly repudiating its central ideas as "revisionism", as "Keynesism", as an utopian and impossible idea of "progressive capitalism". The Communists actually welcomed the abandonment of the Roosevelt policy, and the consequent development of civil war in China, as a good thing. And the rest of the progressive camp, without the Communists to act as a spark-plug, were incapable of moving in an effective manner. Thus the Roosevelt policy on China was permitted to be cast overboard without a serious political struggle.

The Communists, of course, went through the motions of carrying on a campaign "in support of China." In 1946, when Marshall went to China, the Party announced that 500 mass meetings on China were planned. But less than 50 of them were actually held, and these attracted very few people. The policy expounded in these meetings and in the press was not a fight for the Roosevelt policy, but instead as a negative demand to "get out of China", in the spirit and form of complete isolationism, differing from that of the reaction-

Thus, materially un-ripe China participates consciously in the world movement toward socialism, while materially over-ripe America moves blindly under the impulsion of unconscious forces, without leadership.

II.

There is a deep historical truth in the aphorism: "All Roads Lead to Communism."

But it is a false and dangerous conclusion to draw from this correct saying, that all roads are equally good, equally conducive to progress toward this historical goal.

No, there are good and bad roads, and the worst of them lead into swamps in which multitudes can perish before the goal is reached. The historical necessity and inevitability of socialism must be a factor sharpening our alertness, not dulling it, in the choice between good and bad roads, between effective and ineffective policies, between Marxism and dogmatic distortions of Marxism.

In China, overcoming unparalleled difficulties, the Communists are victoriously establishing leadership in the nation as a whole. In America the Communists have been going from one defeat to another for more than three years, losing the favorable positions previously gained. That difference is the expression of good Marxist policy in China,

and dogmatic, sectarian and unprincipled distortions of Marxism in America. The difference in success and failure is, primarily and in the main, the difference between good and bad leadership.

The successful leadership of the Chinese Communist Party is epitomized in the person of Mao Tse-tung.

What is the chief characteristic by which the Chinese people and Communists recognize Mao Tse-tung as their leader?

The answer to this question was formulated by Chou En-lai, in a speech delivered at Yen-an on August 1, 1943, in the following words:

"The twenty-two years of the history of our Party have proved that in all these years Comrade Mao Tse-tung's policy has been to develop a particular line for Chinese Communism, to China-ize Marxism and Leninism." (6)

This "China-ization" of Marxism, its translation into the realities of Chinese life, which produced the policy now successfully winning the support of China as a whole, is not an example of the "nationalist deviation" such as the case of Tito in Yugoslavia. It is, rather, an example of Lenin's definition of the "universals" of Marxism, one of the chief points of which is that "The truth is always concrete."

Lenin never tired of explaining that the truth is never fully true until it is stated in precise terms of time and place, of a particular country and a particular moment of history.

Without this principle, Marxism is transformed into a set of lifeless dogmas, into a rootless "cosmopolitanism", divorced from the masses of the people who are the final and decisive motive force in history. Marxism becomes a living force when it is fused with, and becomes the expression of, the people, the nation, with all its internal and international relationships.

This "China-ization" of Marxism, this fusion with the people, with the nation, which has brought the Chinese Communists to the eve of victory in all China, is accomplished by very practical means. In order to explain this, I will have recourse to extended quotations from the words of Mao Tse-tung, taken from his report to the Party Congress of 1945, in which he speaks of the Party's relationship with the people. Mao said:

"The universal truth of Marxism, reflecting the struggles of the proletariat all over the world, becomes a useful weapon to the Chinese people only when it is wedded to the practical experience of the revolutionary struggles of the Chinese proletariat and people. The Communist Party has achieved this union....Devoting ourselves to serving the Chinese people and not directing them for a single moment,

serving the interests of the people and not the interests of our own group or our individual self, and our responsibility to the people being a consistent one with our responsibility to our leadership--these are our starting points.

"Communists must always be ready to uphold truth, because all truth is compatible with the people's interests. Communists must always be ready to rectify what is wrong, because what is wrong is incompatible with the people's interests. The experience of our twenty-four years has taught us that all correct tasks, policy and style of work are so because they conform to the demands of the people in a particular time and place, and because they serve to unite the people. All erroneous tasks, policy and style of work are so because they do not conform to the people's demand in a particular time and place, and because they are unconnected with the people.

"Dogmatism, empiricism, directivism, tailism, factionalism, bureaucratism, warlordism and arrogance are undesirable because they alienate the people. Such things should be rectified. This Congress should warn every comrade in every link of the party work not to allow himself to be estranged from the people. Every comrade should learn to love the people, to listen to them carefully, to merge with the people wherever he goes, instead of over-

riding them, to develop and raise the consciousness of the masses with due consideration to their level of understanding and to help them to organize themselves on the voluntary principle, and develop gradually all necessary struggles compatible with given circumstances.

"Directivism is wrong, because its impetuosity tends to ignore the people's understanding and is against the voluntary principle. Our comrades must not assume that the people understand what they themselves have understood. We must go to the masses if we want to know whether they understand what we have done and whether they are willing to do as they are bidden. In this way we can avoid directivism.

"Tailism is also wrong, because its slow pace will cause it to lag behind the understanding of the masses, and it is against the principle of leading the people forward. Our comrades must not assume that the people cannot understand what they themselves have not yet understood. Often the people overtake us. They want to go forward but our comrades instead of leading them on, keep airing the views of some laggards, mistakenly thinking these views to be the views of the people. Then they will lag behind the people.

"In short, every comrade should be made to understand that everything a Communist says or does is judged by its compatibility with the major interests of the majority of the people or its acceptance by the majority of the people. Every comrade should be made to understand that as long as we rely upon the people, have confidence in their inexhaustible creative power, trust them and join forces with them, no difficulty will be too great to overcome, and no enemy will be able to crush us but, on the contrary, we shall be able to crush our enemies." (7).

Mao's explanation of Communist relationship with the masses, with the people, is the secret of the success of the Chinese Communists. This is the foundation upon which they hammered out their political program, which sets only such tasks as have been prepared by history, such immediate goals for which the people are prepared to fight.

This is the instrument of control by which the Party quickly learns of any deviation away from the people, whether it be leftism or the tailism that accompanies it, and corrects all such deviations before they can do much damage. The Chinese Communists are victorious because they have not permitted themselves to forget this principle of correct relations with the masses.

American Communists have forgotten this principle, and that is why, in contrast with the bril-

liant successes of the Chinese Communists, the American movement has gone from defeat to defeat for over three years, until today our once powerful and great Left wing movement lies in ruins about us. That which Mao warns against as "directivism", the violation of the voluntary principle of the mass movement, has become the dominant, over-riding characteristic of the current style of work of American Communists. In China it would also have wrecked the work of the Communists, except that Mao and his comrades fought against and defeated it; but in America it was adopted uncritically and persisted in stubbornly even when it had obviously brought disastrous results.

The most important Chinese lesson for American Marxists is this one of the supreme decisiveness of correct relations with the masses.

American Communists cannot live and grow strong by basking in the reflected glory of the Chinese Communists and their victories. But American Communists can live and grow strong by studying how the Chinese victories were won, and by applying these lessons in an intelligent, thoughtful, creative way to the profoundly different conditions of America.

III.

Chinese Communists, building their foundations firmly in the masses, among the people, have been able to lead the country and give it a clear understanding not only of the national tasks but also of their international relationships.

Thus, already in 1945, before the War ended, Mao Tse-tung gave to the Chinese people as estimate of the War and its results which stands today, almost four years later, as unassailably sound, an essential guide in international relations and affecting all national problems.

What did Mao Tse-tung tell the Chinese people in 1945?

It is worth while to quote his words at considerable length, because they deal with a central question which has been thrown into indescribable confusion in the American movement. Mao said:

"Contrary to the expectations of Chinese and foreign reactionaries, the three great democracies--Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union--remain united. Disputes among these democracies have existed and may exist in the future, but in the long run unity will reign supreme. This all-decisive condition, finally demonstrated at the Crimea Conference, was created at the most critical

moment in the history of the world -- in the past decade....The whole aspect of the world has changed since this condition made its appearance....But whoever fails to be fully alive to the possibilities of certain transient or even grave vicissitudes in history, or fails to understand the still considerable strength of isolationist reactionaries who hate to see unity, progress and liberation in their own people and other peoples and who do not like the new world order led jointly by Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, France and China, will be making a political error. However, the general trend of history is fixed and cannot be changed. The world has been given a new aspect." (8).

"The broadest popular victory is achieved only when, after long drawnout struggles, the remnant fascist and anti-democratic forces have been overcome. That day will not come quickly and easily, but, nevertheless, it will come. Its coming, prepared by the victory in the Second World War-- the anti-fascist war -- will make the peace firm and enduring. This is the bright future of the world." (9).

The depth and many-sidedness of this historical judgement expressed by Mao Tse-tung calls for deep study, and cannot be understood by a passing reading. It answers those questions

upon which the American Marxists have been most deeply confused. These answers were necessary to the Chinese victory; their absence among American Marxists deepened the defeats in this country.

American Communists did not understand these historical judgements of Mao, and established quite a different and confused attitude. They did not understand that the victory over the Axis States in World War II prepared the full defeat of all anti-democratic forces, and thus laid the foundation for a firm and enduring peace. They thought, on the contrary, their main task in this question was to shout loud warnings to prepare to win victory in an imminent Third World War. They did not understand that World War II was a single war on the side of the United Nations; they thought, on the contrary, that it was two different, though simultaneous and related wars, only one of which was a war of liberation. They did not understand that the war-unity of the democracies expressed a permanent new relation of forces, a general trend of history fixed by victory, which cannot be changed; they thought, on the contrary, that this unity was accidental, adventitious, and doomed to dissolve the moment Hitler was defeated, and to give way to a general trend of history toward a new world war. They did not understand that reactionary vicissitudes that were to be expected to disturb and interrupt that democratic unity, however grave they might be, would be transient; they thought, on the contrary, that it was the unity which was transient.

These confused and confusing judgements of American Marxists since 1945, on the character of the war and its outcome, in flat contradiction to the clear and definite judgements of Mao Tse-tung, played a decisive role in causing the rapid decline of mass influence of American Marxists, just as Mao's sound and correct judgements led the Chinese Marxists to victory.

If any person should be tempted to speculate that Mao Tse-tung has fundamentally revised his judgement on the war, in the light of events since 1945, they should note that recently, in November 1948, Mao considered it necessary to re-emphasize it. Writing in the journal "For a Lasting Peace; for a People's Democracy", Mao again warned:

"It would be a grave mistake to underestimate the significance of the victory of the Second World War." (10).

Mao clearly foresaw that the reactionary camp would make desperate efforts to break the unity of the democracies. But in advance he declared without hesitation that such attempts, however grave they might be, would be "transient" because they would fly in the face of the new relationship of forces established by the common victory over the Axis States. The events of today, the ignominious collapse of the reactionary policy America substituted for Roosevelt's China policy, is the most profound and illuminating proof of the correctness of Mao's judgement.

The judgement expressed by Mao Tse-tung on the War and its results, is in fundamental agreement with that of Stalin who, in his speech of February 9, 1946, said:

"As distinct from the First World War, the Second World War against the Axis States from the outset assumed the nature of an anti-fascist war of liberation, one of the tasks of which was also to re-establish democratic liberties. The entry of the Soviet Union into the war against the Axis States could only strengthen--and actually did strengthen--the anti-fascist and liberating character of the Second World War."

The Chinese Communists were able to lead the people to victory in the civil war against the reactionary regime of Chiang Kai-shek and all his international support, because, among other things, they were guided by a clear and sound understanding of the favorable world relation of forces, which immunized them from the panic and hysterical fear of the threats of a Third World War and the atomic bomb, such as swept the ranks of the American Marxists and disorientated them, separating them from the masses.

IV.

We have already referred to the words of Chou En-lai when, in 1943, he spoke of Mao Tse-tung's great contribution "to China-ize Marxism and Leninism".

Anna Louise Strong develops this point in her highly-important article entitled "The Thought of Mao Tse-tung", written in Yen-an with the close co-operation and supervision of the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party in 1947, and published in the magazine Amerasia, issue of July, 1947. She wrote:

"'Mao Tse-tung's great accomplishment has been to change Marxism from an European to an Asiatic form', said Liu Hsiao-chi, whom the Chinese Communists consider their second greatest Marxist thinker, and to whom I went for an estimate of Mao's thoughts: 'Marx and Lenin were Europeans; they wrote in European languages about European histories and problems, seldom discussing Asia or China. The basic principles of Marxism are undoubtedly adaptable to all countries, but to apply their general truth to concrete revolutionary practice in China is a difficult task. Mao Tse-tung is Chinese; he analyzes Chinese problems and guides the Chinese people in their struggle to victory.'" (11).

There cannot be the slightest doubt that Communist victories in China today arise directly out of Mao's contribution to "China-ize" Marxism, to give it a specific national form, adapted to the concrete realities of China. When this required Mao to break out of the confines of an "orthodoxy" which had arisen from European experience, he did not hesitate to be "unorthodox".

Thus, Mao even gave a new content to the term "proletariat", which in the European definition of workers trained and disciplined in modern industry is a very small class indeed in China. He broadened and deepened the "orthodox" concept of the role of the peasantry in the revolution. He made an uniquely Chinese application of Lenin's teaching about the "progressive" character of capitalist economic forms, in preparing for socialism--and even in building socialism--in his concept of a "new capitalism" in China. He did not hesitate to speak of the necessity of "harmony" as well as struggle between workers and private Chinese capitalist employers. He perfected a system of military strategy and tactics never before found in any textbooks, whereby an unarmed people gains weapons at the cost of its oppressors. He rounded out the concept of the "new democracy", a new form of the united front, which deals not only with immediate issues of a particular historical moment, but with whole periods of historical development up to and including the transition to socialism.

These things could be accomplished because Mao Tse-tung taught the Chinese Communists that they must not copy unthinkingly any other country, or

adopt unthinkingly any cultural system. Mao said:

"Chinese Communists should never break this rule, even in the application of Marxism. We must unify appropriately the general truth of Marxism and the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution, i.e., we must adopt the national form before we can find Marxism useful, and should never subjectively or mechanically apply it. Subjective and formal Marxists are only playing with Marxism and the Chinese Revolution, and there is no place for them in the revolutionary ranks in China." (12).

Mao Tse-tung specifically repudiated the idea that the Chinese Communists intend, now or in the future, to copy the system of the Soviet Union as they had attempted in an earlier stage. He said:

"Some people wonder if the Communists, once in power, will establish a dictatorship of the proletariat and a one-party system, as they have done in the Soviet Union. We can tell these people this: A new democracy of a union of democratic classes is different in principle from a socialist state with the dictatorship of the proletariat. China, throughout the period of her new democratic system, cannot and should not have a system of government of the character of one-class dictatorship or one-party monopoly of Government.....Russian history determined the Soviet form of society. ...In the same way, Chinese history will determine the Chinese system. An unique form -- a new democratic state and regime of union of

the democratic classes--will be produced, which will be entirely necessary and rational to us and different from the Russian system." (13).

Mao's teachings are now approaching their victory in establishing their leadership of all China. Before that could happen, they had to achieve victory in the minds of the Chinese Communists, then a relatively small group, a minute fraction of the Chinese people. In that preparatory period, Mao was fiercely attacked as a "revisionist" of Marxism. Those who opposed the Marxist spirit of Mao with the letter of the textbooks of Marxism, Mao called dogmatists and formalists. Of their arguments he declared:

"We ought to tell them that their dogmas are more useless than cow-dung. For dung can be utilized as fertilizer, while dogmas cannot." (14).

The rejection of dogmas as more useless than cow-dung was a necessary precondition for the Chinese Communist successes of today. It was the adoption of untested dogmas, and the use of Marxist phrases to cover up the real empiricism and pragmatism that guides their actions, that led American Communists to defeat and isolation. American Marxists, having repudiated the very concept of "Americanizing" Marxism, have imprisoned themselves in dogmatism.

The China-ized Marxism of Mao Tse-tung, in its struggle to be born and to assume the direction of

the Chinese Communist Party, found its main ideological stimulus and support in Stalin, not only in Stalin's general development of Marxist theory, but in his writings and speeches specifically concerning China. For, unlike Marx and Lenin, who had no opportunity to dig deeply into Chinese problems, Stalin studied China profoundly from 1926 onward, and his writings pointed consistently in the direction Mao has developed. A study of this intimate inter-relationship in the development of Stalin's and Mao's thought on China is a very valuable and interesting task. We cannot attempt such a task in this lecture, however, but must content ourselves with indicating its importance. It is to be fervently hoped that Stalin's complete writings on China will be made available in the English language without too much delay.

To the degree that Marxism in China became, under the leadership of Mao, specifically Chinese in form, the more was it able to emphasize the international essence of Marxism, its universal validity. Every serious contribution to the development of Marxism lies in those specific forms which express the problems of a great nation and their solutions. In turn, every successful adaptation of Marxism throws new light upon the problems of other countries, enriches the general international content of Marxism.

In the writings of Mao Tse-tung we find that he carefully limits any tendency to generalize China's form of Marxism to the area of the colonial and semi-colonial lands of Asia, which

share with China many basic historical, economic and political features.

Nevertheless, sound as this limitation is, it has been shown in life that the experience of the Chinese Communists, especially in the co-relation of immediate aims and ultimate program, the preparation for transition to socialism, the building of the pre-requisites of socialism,--have exerted a profound influence upon the thought and practice of European Marxists.

This fact is undoubtedly reflected in the use of Mao's term "new democracy" to designate collectively the new regimes of transition to socialism that arose after the War in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania, Yugoslavia and Albania.

These countries of Southeastern Europe are not, as is China, entering a protracted period of pre-socialist development, they are indeed already engaged in socialist construction. But they had learned much from Chinese as well as Russian experience of the problems of transition from one system to another, which enabled them to lighten the burdens, economic and political, of the transition period.

It is my opinion, therefore, that Anna Louise Strong was correct when she wrote, in the 1947 article already quoted, the following observations:

"'New Democracy' was also published in Moscow both in Russian and in English. The Soviet re-

viewers recognized it as a new 'Marxist classic', applicable not only to China, but to similar semi-feudal, semi-colonial lands. It seems highly likely that the theories of Mao Tse-tung's 'New Democracy' influenced the forms of government that have arisen in parts of post-war Europe." (15).

If this is true, as I think it is, its significance in a theoretical sense is very deep. The experience of Marxists in the most undeveloped of the great nations has helped to shape the policies of Marxists in the heart of Europe. The experiences in completing the non-socialist democratic revolution in China have helped clarify the problems of those countries now entering the immediate transition to socialism. This is a deep confirmation of the universality of Marxism, of its applicability in all lands and at all stages of historical development, of its universal inter-connectedness of development--when it is applied as living, creative thought and not as dogma to be recited by rote from textbooks.

V.

The Chinese Communists have branded Chiang Kai-shek and many leading personalities most closely associated with his regime, as "war criminals" who must be placed on trial for their crimes and judged by the Chinese people. The newspapers tell us

that Chiang may soon flee to the island of Formosa since there is no spot in China proper where he might, even for a short while, escape this judgement.

In this circumstance, it is very instructive to recall the so-called "Sian incident" of some 12 years ago, when the Chinese Communists intervened to save the life of Chiang Kai-shek when he was a prisoner in the hands of the rebel "Young Marshall" Chang Hsueh-liang (son of the "Old Marshall" Chang Tso-lin, long the dictator of Manchuria until his assassination by Japanese agents in 1928). There is little doubt that the intervention of the Communists saved Chiang Kai-shek from execution at that time.

Why did the Chinese Communists save Chiang's life 12 years ago, while now they demand his trial as a war criminal? Was it that they did not know Chiang's true character at that time, that they had illusions about him?

No, in 1936-1937 the Chinese Communists already had 10 years experience with Chiang as a counter-revolutionary murderer of masses, as the ruthless destroyer of their democratic organizations. They had no illusions about Chiang. But they knew that millions of the Chinese people did not know the true nature of Chiang, that they gave to him the loyalty they felt toward the party founded by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the Kuomintang. If Chiang had been executed by a rebelling subordinate in 1937, those millions would never have learned that Chiang

was a traitor to the cause of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, they would have enshrined Chiang as a martyr, the Chinese masses would have been deeply split, the Chinese Revolution would have been delayed and weakened. The Communists did not fall into this trap. They used their influence to secure Chiang's release.

From the date of the "Sian incident" the progress of the Communists among the people has been most decisive; from that date the steady decline of the Chiang dictatorship begins.

When Anna Louise Strong was in Yenan in 1947, she discussed this incident with the Communist leaders. She reports as follows:

"Some Communists at the time opposed this policy, notably Chang Kuo-tao, who afterwards became a member of Chiang's secret police. All the present leading members of the Communist Party, led by Mao Tse-tung, urged the release of Chiang and still think that they were right. 'It was the only way to unite China against the Japanese', explains Lu Ting-yi." (16).

Can American Marxists imagine, by the wildest stretch of the imagination, their own present leader, Foster, under similar circumstances adopting the wise and far-seeing attitude of the Chinese Communists? Of course not! For three years Foster has been trying to force events, to leap over stages, by "liquidating" his enemies under

any and all circumstances—in the majority of cases without success! If Foster had been in Sian, he would inevitably have joined with Chang Kuo-tao in demanding the immediate execution of Chiang Kai-shek. Foster's main slogan of action is "Off with their heads", applied indiscriminately to enemies, potential enemies, long-established friends who doubt Foster's infallibility, and to Party members who say "Yes" too slowly. As a result, while the Chinese Communists win their nation, the American Communists lose their own long-time followers.

VI.

After the Chiang counter-revolution in 1927, with its bloody suppression of the Communists, the labor and peasant unions, and all democratic mass organizations, it took the Chinese Communists eight long years to re-stabilize their leadership and get back on the road to winning the broad masses of the nation.

Only in 1935 was Mao Tse-tung finally elected as their chief leader, and in 1945 he became the officially-chosen Chairman of the Party.

In the period from 1927 to 1935, the leadership was changed many times, and each time it was soon wrecked again by "dogmatic" and leftist mistakes. Li Li-san, one of the most able of these leaders, was removed in 1930 to halt his adventurous drive toward armed uprisings in the big cities. But

soon the dogmatists again controlled the Party leadership.

Anna Louise Strong's article, already quoted, says of this period:

"Many of these (leaders) had studied abroad, especially in Moscow, and had the prestige of being able to quote Marx, Lenin and Stalin in great detail. Their ignorance of the practical problems of China was catastrophic. They maintained the 'pure proletarian line', permitting no 'united front' with anyone. They confiscated land, not only of landlords but of rich peasants, were highly suspicious of 'intellectuals', opposed guerilla war, and demanded a 'modern army'. All these policies had a heavy overcoat of Marxist-Leninist phrases, in which the 'dogmatists' were specialists. Their leadership lasted four years, until the now historic Tsen-yi conference, held in January, 1935, in Kweichow, in the midst of the famous Long March." (17).

Miss Strong quotes the words of Lu Ting-yi estimating the 1927-1935 period on behalf of the present leadership in 1947, as follows:

"The leadership of the dogmatists cost us very heavily. When we were in Kiangsi we were offered a united front with the Fukien general, who opposed Chiang's capitulation to the Japanese and offered his alliance to us.

Our dogmatists were too orthodox to build a united front with 'that bourgeois', and thus we lost the chance of victory. We also indulged in too much positional warfare in Kiangsi, especially against Chiang's Fifth Extermination Campaign." (18).

Only the final rejection of the dogmatist leadership, in 1935, and the raising of Mao Tse-tung to leadership, saved the remnants of the Communist movement in China and gave it a new chance. And of those remnants, the only organized force was composed of the survivors of the Long March, numbering some 40,000 when Yen-an was reached.

In the case of the Chinese "dogmatists" who led the Party to defeats and disasters, it must be said that at least their unwise and premature "uprisings" were directed against the real enemy.

In America our Marxist leadership is operating at a lower level, politically, than that of the dogmatists of the Chinese Party in former years. Our American "dogmatists", who seized the leadership of the American Communists in 1945, have been conducting adventurous "uprisings", not against the real enemy, but against long-time allies in the labor movement, and have driven all these allies away from us. They have completely wrecked the great Left-wing movement in the trade unions which for a dozen years gave the tone, intellectual leadership, and the main di-

rection to the upsurge of the Labor movement from a low point of three million members to the present high point of 15 millions, and which directly held the organizational leadership of several millions. They wrecked a great movement already in existence, by arrogance and stupidity, which drove the masses away from Marxism and into the arms of the Right and Center leaders. The Chinese Communists deposed their "dogmatists" from leadership in 1935; but the American Marxists ten years later gave to their dogmatists, Foster and Bittelman, the guiding power over the movement—in 1945, when they had had time to learn better.

VII.

Mao Tse-tung played the leading role in developing the tactics of the Chinese Revolution, which have scored such brilliant successes. This tactical system transformed Chiang's armies into transit-stations through which American munitions intended to crush the Communists, flowed instead into the hands of the Communist-led armies and were used to crush Chiang.

The basic principles of this tactical system, although developed in a special Chinese form, are adaptable everywhere in situations where the Marxists face an enemy of superior immediate forces, in the political as well as the military struggle.

The central idea of this tactical system is, in the words quoted by Miss Strong, as follows:

"We shall fight only when conditions are favorable to us. Every such battle must be short and decisive, we must win every battle.

"We are for quick, decisive battles and against protracted battles, but the war as a whole is a protracted one. In battles we oppose 'beating the many with the few'; we are for 'beating the few with the many'" (19).

There is a deep wisdom in these words, which may not be apparent without close and detailed study and much practical thought. Indeed, many Americans who pride themselves upon being "profound Marxists" demonstrate by their actions that they have not the faintest glimmerings of this wisdom.

The Chinese Communists themselves had to pay a big price for this wisdom. They learned it the hard way, with the expenditure of the blood of hundreds of thousands of China's best sons and daughters. Under the leadership of their "dogmatists", they tried for years to breach the fortresses of reaction by the heroic frontal attack of the vanguard, where the enemy forces were strongest.

Only when years of sacrificial failure had demonstrated the folly of the dogmatists, did the Chinese Communists adopt the wisdom of Mao Tse-tung, the simple principle to give battle when the conditions are most favorable, to win every battle by outnumbering the enemy, to avoid battle where the forces of the enemy are superior, to protract the war but shorten the battle.

This tactical system is adaptable to the current problems of American Marxists. Its application during the past three years could have enabled the American movement to avoid almost every defeat and setback which it has suffered. All these defeats came as a result of Communist boastfulness and arrogance, the primitive attitude that "we", the select few, with our "heroism" and our self-bestowed medals identifying us as the "vanguard", can give a beating to anyone and everyone so bold as to reject our instructions. American Communists became self-hypnotized with the idea of "beating the many with the few". That is why they themselves took so many beatings in the last three years--and seem to be determined to take many more beatings before they will adopt the wisdom of Mao Tse-tung.

VIII.

It is not enough, however, merely to take a look at China and then "draw conclusions". When a person is thoroughly under the influence of dogmatic leadership, he may look at China and draw only dogmatic conclusions of the most erroneous sort.

I have in mind, of course, a specific example. In The Worker, of January 9, 1949, none other than Ben Gold, leader of the Fur Workers Union, draws a "profound" lesson from China. Gold is trying to explain why the Left wing took such a beating in the Portland Convention of the CIO, and he looks all over the world for his explanations. He finds one in the victories of the Chinese Communists! Here are Gold's own words:

"Is it possible that Murray's position in the Steel Workers Union, or Reuther's in the Automobile Workers Union, is in need of red-baiting issues and campaigns? Is it possible that the failure of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, which are feeding the hungry with bullets instead of bread, caused them nervousness in the Convention? Or is it the successful march of the Chinese Communists in spite of the billions of dollars our government poured into the corrupt and degenerate Chiang Kai-shek clique?"(20).

Here is, indeed, a flower of dogmatic thought! Murray and the CIO Convention considered it necessary to give the Communists a beating because, forsooth, the Chinese Communist armies are approaching Nanking, the government of Chiang Kai-shek is tottering on its last legs! But beware, Mr. Murray, I, Ben Gold, warn you to treat us more politely or some day we will give you the same medicine Chiang Kai-shek is now forced to take!

This combination of blustering and cringing, which runs through all of Gold's two-page article, and of which the quoted "lesson from China" is only a high point, is a natural expression of the false policy that brought defeats to the Left wing in America. The dogmatist is not permitted to find the explanation for his defeat in his own mistakes, in the ill-planned and ill-prepared character of his own position. He must find the explanation as far away from himself as possible. If he is an ordinary garden-variety of dogmatist, he may find the explanation in an unfavorable disposition of the constellations of the stars; but if he is a dogmatist of Marxism he will find it in China, in the world situation, in "objective difficulties", in the blows of American imperialism--anywhere and everywhere except in his own errors! In the very victories of Marxists abroad, he will find the explanation for his own defeat, even while he boasts that some day he will do as well!

It is very illuminating of the true character of such reasoning, that while Gold boasts of Com-

munist strength in China, he pleads with Murray that the Left wing is growing weaker in America, and therefore does not deserve the beating Murray gave. In the paragraph preceeding, and furnishing the jumping-off place for, Gold's leap to China, he writes the following incredible words:

"The progressives were defeated in the United Automobile Workers Union. They were defeated in the Maritime Union. They were also defeated recently in the Transport Workers Union. Thus, Murray was not afraid of the strength of the Left wing. Why, then, this terrific attack upon the left-wingers? Nor was Murray afraid of the recently-organized Progressive Party. The vote for Wallace was small. How, then, can one explain the terrific anti-Communist hysteria whipped up at the Convention, not only by Reuther and Baldanzi, and the rest of them; but especially by Phil Murray?". (21).

This question which puzzles Gold is not, of course, answered by his excursion to China, where he found a completely false and misleading answer. The victories of the Chinese Communists have the natural and inevitable effect to give new strength to Marxists everywhere else in the world. If in America this effect is not felt, because it has been cancelled out by the stupid mistakes of the American Marxist leadership, it still remains not only wrong but positively indecent to suggest that American Marxists had to take a beating be-

cause Chinese Marxists won victories.

Upon what theory does Gold base his plea to Murray not to kick the Left wing around because it is becoming weak?

He did not find that theory in China. The Chinese Marxists know very well that they win and keep friends and allies by winning victories and growing ever stronger. They could tell Gold that Murray, like Chinese Centrists, has no use for an alliance with a Left wing that is losing its positions; he wants an alliance only with those who grow stronger. When the Left wing attacks and undermines Murray, at the same time that it is itself losing its own former strength, why is Murray expected to cling to his former alliance with the Left wing? Only for the sake of Ben Gold's beautiful brown eyes?

Murray was formerly allied with the Left wing because he respected its growing strength, and needed it on his side. Now he can no longer respect its strength, because he sees this strength rapidly slipping through the nerveless fingers of the Left-wing leadership. He can feel only contempt for men who squander so lightly a rich heritage of power. He does not need the Left wing any more, for it would only weaken, not strengthen, him.

In such a situation, Ben Gold looked for the wrong answer when he turned to China. He could

have found helpful answers there--but not in the form of an alibi to cover up his own blunders and those of his leader, Foster.

IX.

Current events in China throw a bright light upon Roosevelt's China policy, proving that FDR had correctly formulated the only policy for American-Chinese relations which could contribute to world peace and progress.

These events reveal equally clearly the miserable bankruptcy of the substitute policy which Marshall installed instead of Roosevelt's, after his long visit to China in 1946.

Roosevelt understood that the system of colonial empire in Asia had been destroyed in the course of World War II, and that to reconstruct it was impossible.

He also understood that it was equally impossible to replace the colonial system by a system of puppet governments consisting of native caretakers and managers for the great imperialist powers.

Roosevelt had nothing but contempt and distrust for Chiang Kai-shek and his kind, precisely because of their combination of servility and

arrogance, their eagerness to sell themselves to America as servants and their arrogant insistence upon serving only in their own peculiar semi-feudal and anti-democratic way.

Roosevelt understood that only real independence for China, expressed in a government rising from and controlled by the people, with a program of thorough modernization of China's economy, especially on the land, could serve America's needs as well as China's, and could take its place in world affairs as factor making for peace, not for disturbing the peace.

Roosevelt also understood that China could achieve this independence and modernization only in one or the other of two possible ways: Either by the way of joint help and guidance from the USA and the USSR, acting together on a policy combining the essential interests of both and of China herself; or by means of a broad revolutionary upheaval and civil war, in which America would intervene vainly on the reactionary side, and out of which the Chinese Communists would emerge as leaders of the nation, driving out the reactionary servants of American capital.

Roosevelt considered it the part of wisdom to preserve China as a friend of America with co-operative relations. That is why he projected the idea of American-Russian joint sponsorship of a democratic coalition government in China.

The Soviet Union expressed its agreement with Roosevelt's project. But the death of FDR cut short his actions toward its realization. Nevertheless, as late as December, 1945, this policy was still maintained, and was embodied in a specific American-Soviet declaration, negotiated in Moscow by Secretary Byrnes, and could have been realized if it has been backed by American goodwill, intelligence, and determination. But this enlightened policy was dropped, abandoned without explanation, by the United States, after Marshall returned from his trip to China in 1946.

Marshall went to China ostensibly to put into effect the Roosevelt policy, which had become officially a joint American-Russian policy. But this man who was a hero in military matters, proved to be a capitulator in diplomacy. He surrendered without a serious battle to Chiang Kai-shek and his cliques, and even while denouncing them for incompetence and corruption, placed American influence, money and arms in the service of Chiang's program of conquering China by a military dictatorship.

Chiang Kai-shek, the corrupt, semi-feudal, ignorant warlord of backward China, was able to impose upon advanced, supposedly-intelligent, America and its government his own policy already demonstratively bankrupt, and to throw into the waste-basket that American policy which had been formulated and urged by the most enlightened statesman this country has produced in modern times.

immediately to socialism?

The fundamental judgement in each case is undoubtedly correct, but for quite different reasons. In China the reason is the absence of sufficient development of modern production techniques to furnish the material prerequisites for successfully going over to socialist economic forms. Only a "prolonged period" of "free development of private capitalist economy" can produce these material prerequisites for socialism in China.

But in America the material prerequisites for a socialist economy, in the techniques of production, are the highest in the world--far higher than in the European countries that have recently begun their socialist construction. In America the obstacles to socialism are not material, not "objective", not the "unripeness" and resistance of things, of productive forces; the obstacles here are, on the contrary, political in nature, they are "subjective", the "unripeness" of men's minds in the mass, the resistance of political inertia and social prejudice.

In China the proletariat, bearer of socialism, is fully ripe for socialism "subjectively", in its aspirations, but the proletariat is a small fraction of the nation which is materially unprepared. In America the proletariat is the overwhelming majority of the nation, and the nation is fully prepared for socialism in material things, overripe in fact; but the proletariat is not politically ripe, not prepared "subjectively", for

the great historical change.

On the supreme question of the transition from capitalism to socialism, in short, the problem in China is essentially one of creating the necessary material conditions, which in America are already over-developed. The problem in America is essentially one of raising the political understanding of the working class up to the level of the existing material conditions. In China the political development of the nation is leaping far ahead of its economic development in the technique of production, while in America it is lagging far behind.

In the broad historical-political sense, both China and America (together with the whole world) are moving in the direction of socialism.

In China the present effective leaders of the nation, the Marxists, the Communist Party headed by Mao Tse-tung, see their nation's path clearly, including the "prolonged period" in which "private capitalism" will be an instrument to prepare the ultimate transition to socialism.

In America, the Marxists, in sharp contrast, have departed from the main stream of the nation's development, are losing those positions previously gained in the working class movement, are more and more isolated, and have lost their grasp of the very concept of "transition" to socialism and its problems.

aries not all in form, but only in substituting a "leftist" motivation. Such a campaign, of course, left the masses cold and unstirred, and the Marshall supporters in command of the field, so far as American public life was concerned.

It can be said, in general, that since the end of the World War, nothing of significance has been done by the Left wing in America to help the Chinese Revolution or to fight for a correct American policy toward China.

For confirmation of this fact, turn to page 71 of the current issue of the magazine, Political Affairs, where, in an article giving a fairly competent high-school student's summary of the position of the Chinese Communists, the author asks what can American progressives report as their contribution to the Chinese victories. He can only answer, "shamefully little", and wail:

"It has been one of the most striking weaknesses of our progressive movement, and particularly of the trade unions, that it has been so lacking in militancy on the issue of China." (22).

But how could any Marxist expect the trade unions and the broad progressive movement to be militant about China, when the American Communists advanced no program within their comprehension, to arouse and guide them--when the Communists were, instead, breaking with their allies

and plunging one union after another into desperate factional battles in which the Communists were disastrously defeated?

Of these and similar problems, the American Communist Party leadership chooses to remain silent, or to content themselves with a few passing remarks which dismiss as "malicious slanders" by persons of ill-will the very act of asking questions.

X.

Yes, there are great lessons in the Chinese events for American Marxists, which need to be studied seriously and intensively. This lecture has touched only upon some of the high spots.

But these lessons can be learned in a fundamental way only as part of a deep discussion of American problems, in which American Marxists learn how to turn their own course away from defeat, in the direction of the masses and of the victory that only mass support can bring.

--the end--

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